

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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TAGS: PFOR, GR, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TASCA'S APPEARANCE BEFORE SUB-
COMMITTEE ON EUROPE

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF OPENING STATEMENT AMBASSADOR TASCA
INTENDS TO MAKE MARCH 27 BEFORE HFAC (ROSENTHAL). DEPART-
MENT DOES NOT PLAN TO RELEASE TEXT UNTIL TRANSCRIPT OF
TESTIMONY HAS BEEN CLEARED.

2. QUOTE: MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:
IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO APPEAR AGAIN BEFORE THIS
COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS GREECE. BEFORE ADDRESSING MYSELF TO
ANY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE
USEFUL FOR ME TO MAKE SOME GENERAL PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF CHANGES IN THE GREEK SIT-
UATION SINCE I MET WITH THIS COMMITTEE IN AUGUST 1971. A
REVIEW OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD BE USEFUL IN UNDER-
STANDING THE SITUATION IN GREECE AND OUR POLICY IN RELATION
TO GREECE.

4. IN THE EARLY FALL OF 1971 A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE PAPA-
DOPOULOS CABINET TOOK PLACE, AS A RESULT OF WHICH A NUMBER
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OF EX-MILITARY OFFICERS WERE REPLACED BY TECHNICIANS. IN

DECEMBER, A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION WAS

ESTABLISHED. ON JANUARY 1, 1972, THEN PRIME MINISTER PAPADOPOULOS LIFTED MARTIAL LAW EXCEPT FOR THESSALONIKI AND ATHENS/PIRAEUS, AND AT THE END OF THE YEAR, MARTIAL LAW WAS LIFTED IN THESSALONIKI. ANOTHER CHANGE, INTERESTING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS, TOOK PLACE TOWARD THE END OF MARCH 1972, WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER REMOVED GENERAL ZOITAKIS AS REGENT AND PERSONALLY ASSUMED THE RESPONSIBILITIES, LARGELY CEREMONIAL, OF THAT OFFICE.

5. IN 1973 ANOTHER SERIES OF EVENTS TOOK PLACE WHICH, IN RETROSPECT, APPARENTLY SET THE STAGE FOR THE NOVEMBER 25 COUP. IN THE SPRING, PROBLEMS IN THE UNIVERSITIES, WHICH HAD BRIEFLY SURFACED THE PRECEDING AUTUMN, BECAME RELATIVELY ACUTE; FOR EXAMPLE AN EIGHT-WEEK STRIKE TOOK PLACE AT ATHENS UNIVERSITY. GROWING INFLATION AND VARIOUS OTHER ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES POSED A NEW SERIES OF PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT. IN THE LAST WEEK OF MAY, A NAVY-LED ATTEMPTED COUP WAS ABORTED. THESE DEVELOPMENTS PRODUCED AN IMMEDIATE REACTION FROM THE PAPADOPOULOS GOVERNMENT. ON JUNE 1, THE PRIME MINISTER DECLARED GREECE A REPUBLIC, NAMING HIMSELF TO THE PRESIDENCY, AND THE THEN-HEAD OF THE HELLENIC ARMED FORCES, GENERAL ODYSSEUS ANGELIS, VICE PRESIDENT. PAPADOPOULOS ALSO ANNOUNCED CHANGES IN THE GREEK CONSTITUTION WHICH EFFECTIVELY EXPANDED HIS ALREADY ENHANCED EXECUTIVE POWERS BY ADDING EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY IN THE KEY FIELDS OF FOREIGN POLICY, DEFENSE AND INTERNAL SECURITY. HE TOLD THE GREEK PEOPLE THAT A REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD ON JULY 29 TO GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONFIRM THE CHANGES HE HAD ALREADY PUT INTO EFFECT.

6. THE REFERENDUM TOOK PLACE IN A VERY DIFFICULT ATMOSPHERE WHICH RAISED SERIOUS DOUBTS AS TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE GREEK PEOPLE WERE CASTING THEIR VOTES. THERE WERE WIDE-SPREAD ACCUSATIONS BY GREEKS LIVING ABROAD AND BY OTHERS FORMERLY ACTIVE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF GREECE THAT THE REFERENDUM WAS FRAUDULENT. WE EXPRESSED OUR OWN CONCERN DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT PAPADOPOULOS.

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PRIME MINISTER PAPADOPOULOS STATED IN ADVANCE OF THE REFERENDUM THAT WHATEVER ITS OUTCOME, GREECE WOULD REMAIN A REPUBLIC, HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SERVE AS ITS PRESIDENT UNTIL 1981, AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES HE HAD ALREADY MADE WOULD REMAIN IN EFFECT. THE RESULT OF THE REFERENDUM WAS A VOTE OF SOME 75 PERCENT AFFIRMING THE REPUBLIC AND PAPADOPOULOS AS ITS PRESIDENT.

7. IN HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON AUGUST 19, PRESIDENT PAPADOPOULOS ANNOUNCED THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW, THE

AMNESTY OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THE IMMINENT APPOINTMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, WHICH, UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, WAS TO LAY THE BASIS FOR POLITICAL LIFE, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES. FINALLY, HE PROMISED THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD BY THE END OF 1974.

8. ON OCTOBER 8, A NEW CABINET WAS SWORN IN WITH SPYROS MARKEZINIS, A FORMER MINISTER AND LEADER OF THE SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVE PARTY, AS PRIME MINISTER. MARKEZINIS ANNOUNCED THAT HIS PLATFORM "THREE F'S - FORGIVE, FORGET AND FREE ELECTIONS". HE REPEATEDLY DECLARED HIS PURPOSE WAS TO ARRANGE FOR "IRREPROACHABLE ELECTIONS" AT THE EARLIEST FEASIBLE DATE.

9. ON NOVEMBER 14, HOWEVER, A STUDENT "SIT-IN" BEGAN AT THE POLYTECHNION UNIVERSITY IN ATHENS WHICH GREW IN PROPORTIONS UNTIL ON NOVEMBER 16 THE POLICE FOUND THEMSELVES INCAPABLE OF CONTROLLING THE SITUATION. EARLY IN THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 17 THE ARMY WAS REQUESTED TO ASSIST IN THE MAINTENANCE OF ORDER, TANKS BROKE DOWN THE MAIN GATES OF THE UNIVERSITY, AND THE STUDENTS WERE DISPERSED. MARTIAL LAW WAS REINSTITUTED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. A PRESS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED BY PRIME MINISTER MARKEZINIS FOR THAT DAY, AT WHICH IT HAS BEEN WIDELY SPECULATED HE WOULD ANNOUNCE SPECIFIC PLANS FOR ELECTIONS, WAS CANCELLED. THERE FOLLOWED AN UNEASY WEEK DURING WHICH ATHENS REMAINED UNDER MARTIAL LAW WHICH WAS FINALLY LIFTED ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 24.

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10. AS THE COMMITTEE IS AWARE, EARLY ON NOVEMBER 25, 1973 A COUP LED BY MILITARY ASSOCIATES OF THEN-PRESIDENT PAPADOPOULOS RESULTED IN HIS REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. THE REASONS BEHIND THE COUP WERE VARIED AND COMPLICATED. THEY INCLUDE SUCH MATTERS AS STUDENT PROBLEMS, GROWING INFLATION, CHARGES OF CORRUPTION, AND CONCERN IN SOME QUARTERS THAT PAPADOPOULOS HAD ABANDONED THE ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES OF THE APRIL 21, 1967 REVOLUTION. WHATEVER THE REASONS, THE FACT IS THAT THE PRESENT REGIME EFFECTIVELY SEIZED CONTROL AND IS NOW GOVERNING GREECE.

11. FOR THE PRESENT, MARTIAL LAW REMAINS IN EFFECT, AND PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA ARE CLOSELY CONTROLLED. GIVEN THESE RESTRICTIONS IT IS DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO GAUGE GREEK OPINION. HOWEVER, AN ATTITUDE OF

WATCHFUL AND CONCERNED WAITING PREVAILS.

12. PRIME MINISTER ANDROUTSOPOULOS HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO PREPARE THE COUNTRY FOR "UNDISTURBED AND GENUINE DEMOCRATIC LIFE" AND PROMISED THAT A NEW CONSTITUTION WILL BE DRAFTED. NO TIMETABLE, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED, AND THE PRIME MINISTER HAS PROCLAIMED ONLY THAT "WHEN THE COUNTRY IS READY IT WILL BE LED TO ELECTIONS." THE PRESIDENT, GENERAL GHIZIKIS, HAS MADE SIMILARLY UNSPECIFIC COMMENTS.

13. THROUGH THE YEARS OF THE PAPADOPOULOS REGIME WE HAD EVOLVED A POLICY THAT PROTECTED THE MUTUAL SECURITY INTERESTS OF BOTH GREECE AND THE U.S., PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP IN NATO, AND THAT REFLECTED OUR BELIEF THAT THESE SECURITY INTERESTS WOULD BE BEST SERVED OVER THE LONG-RUN IF GREECE WOULD RETURN TO GOVERNMENTS ENJOYING BROAD POPULAR SUPPORT.

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